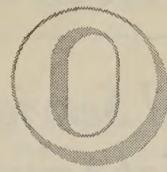


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JAN 18 1955

Newsletter

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ORGANIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES OF THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Organized in 1929

OCTOBER 1954

Vol. 6, No. 3

Legislative Highlights

On September 1, the President approved the fringe Federal employment benefits bill H.R. 2263, one of OPEDA's main objectives of the past year. The major provisions of this law (P.L. 763, 83d Congress) are summarized in the report of the Economic Committee on page 3.

The new "career-conditional" appointment system tentatively proposed by the Civil Service Commission pending repeal of the Whitten Amendment is now possible under the modifications of that amendment made in the fringe benefits bill. Meredith C. Wilson, chairman of the Professional Committee, describes this proposal in his report on page three.

The Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Act went into effect August 29. Your Public Service Committee gave support to it which helped materially with its passage. Other activities of the Public Service Committee are listed in its report on page three.

Our Executive Officer

We still have no full-time Executive Officer. An offer has been made to a very capable person, but we have had no definite answer. We expect to have someone in the job in time for the next legislative session. In the meantime your officers, council, committees and loyal members will carry on with Mrs. Lila Meyers in charge of the OPEDA office and Miss Margaret Meehan assisting. They are doing a fine job.

**Please Notify
OPEDA Office
of Change in
Address or Agency**

Council Ballot Changed

Instead of preparing individual ballots for each agency, as in the past, the Council decided to prepare only one ballot on which will be listed candidates from each agency. You will be instructed to vote only for those candidates from your own agency.

Shorten the Name OPEDA?

Members attending the luncheon meeting September 21, received a preliminary ballot on which they could vote regarding shortening the name of OPEDA. The ballot was double-barreled: asking first for a vote on whether to shorten the name or not, and asking second for a vote on six names listed.

If the majority of those attending the luncheon meeting indicate a preference for a change in name (ballots are not yet counted), a final ballot will be submitted to all members of the organization. The list of proposed names, however, will be whittled down to the two top ones selected by those at the luncheon meeting.

The committee in charge is still open to any suggestions for a change in name. Just call one of the following:

Charles A. Logan, ARS, chairman, code 82, ext. 412.
Marden D. Kimball, CSS, ext. 2717.
Oscar R. Lebeau, FCS, ext. 4464.
James E. Lee, FHA, ext. 4808.
Glenn K. Rule, SCS, ext. 4531.
Or write OPEDA, Box 381, Washington, D. C.

Consolidation of Constitution and By-Laws

The Council will act on the proposal of the special committee set up to consolidate OPEDA's constitution and by-laws at its October meeting. Harry Irion, FS, retired, headed the committee. Serving with him were: Rodger Kaufman, CEA; Mrs. Louise Krueger, B&P; Thomas J. Kuzelka, AMS; and D. A. Spencer, ARS.

Editor for Sept. Newsletter

Miss Dorothy M. Martin, a staunch OPEDA member from the Forest Service, has again taken over the editorial duties for this issue of the NEWSLETTER. We are indebted to her for this assistance.

—Chris Henderson, President.

October Luncheon Meeting

Warren Irons, Director of the Bureau of Departmental Operations of the Civil Service Commission, will be guest speaker at the monthly OPEDA luncheon, October 19. He will devote most of his talk to the proposed health insurance legislation. Since this proposal is being studied by our Public Service Committee, the luncheon provides a good opportunity to become familiar with the program. Time: 12 noon; place: 6962-70 South Building.

Council Discusses Cost Of Running OPEDA

OPEDA should have 3,500 members to break even, according to the cost analysis sheet prepared and circulated to Council members, President Chris Henderson said at the Council luncheon meeting July 27. He explained that one reason for not having an executive officer at the present time is a shortage of funds. The financial statement of June 30, showed our bank balance to be less than at this time last year.

Mr. Henderson reported that the question of increasing dues was discussed at the Executive Committee meeting, and it was decided to make every effort to increase membership before taking such action.

Some suggestions were that we get more publicity for OPEDA in the USDA and AG-REPORTER. Also
(Continued on Page 4)

Dues Notices Out Soon

As it is our practice to send out dues notices and ballots for Council election at approximately the same time, the Council has voted to have them mailed in the same envelope this year. This will avoid duplication of postage, mailing, and handling. You can expect them in November.

For those of you who are still out to get that "One More in '54," anyone joining in the last quarter will automatically become members for the balance of this year and for all of 1955. All for \$2.

OPEDA Sponsors Federal-State Retirement Bills

OPEDA played an important part in the splendid progress made in the last session of Congress toward final enactment of legislation to enable Civil Service employees who formerly worked in Federal-State programs to qualify for retirement credit for time spent in such work. The Harvey Bill, H.R. 1553 (identical to the Marshall Bill, H.R. 521) was passed in the House of Representatives and was later reported out of the Senate Post Office and Civil Service Committee. The 83d Congress adjourned before the Senate had time to vote on the bill. Plans are under way to try to get the bill passed early in the next session of Congress.

The fact that OPEDA is an official organization of USDA employees naturally gave prestige to the bill and pointed out to Congressmen and other leaders that many persons are interested in this legislation. OPEDA handled the funds to finance this project, sent out thousands of letters and performed other services which could not have been done by individual Government employees. The Executive Officer of OPEDA testified before Senate and House Committees, as only registered lobbyists are permitted to do. This is only a sample of what OPEDA can do to help USDA employees.

The services performed by OPEDA personnel on the Federal-State retirement bill were paid for out of the \$5,040 special fund contributed by 452 persons interested in the legislation. OPEDA membership fees are far too limited to meet such expenses.

On behalf of the 5,000 persons interested in this proposed legislation, I thank the OPEDA Executive Committee for authorizing the organization to perform this service. Lets keep our OPEDA membership current and get as many new members as possible.—Frate Bull, Chairman, Advisory Committee on Federal-State Retirement Matters.

OPEDA After Retirement or Separation?

Frequently we are asked if those retiring or otherwise leaving the USDA are still eligible for membership in OPEDA. The answer is "Yes"—as our by-laws provide that "Persons who as members of the Department have established membership will not be disqualified for continued membership by reason of retirement from active duty or because of transfer to another executive department or agency of the unit in which they are employed."

We might add that our membership includes quite a few retirees, and OPEDA is working for them as well as for its currently employed members.

Coordinating Civil Service Retirement With Social Security

The Pros and Cons of the Kaplan Report

Robert J. Myers, Chief Actuary, Social Security Administration, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, told OPEDA members how a combination of social security and civil service retirement would work at the monthly luncheon meeting June 30.

The Plan

Under the Kaplan proposal, Civil Service retirement coverage would not begin until the employee had three years of service. The three years, however, would be creditable once the individual came under the system. Retirement benefits payable to persons under 65, whether retired for age or disability would be the same as at present. At 65, retirement benefits would be recomputed under the new formula, and the resulting lower amount would be paid. When OASI benefit is added, the total is larger. Widows and widowers of those dying in service would receive an immediate annuity—50% of the annuity earned to date. They would not have to be over age 50 or have a child under 18, as under present law. The present child survivor annuities would be eliminated.

Advantages

The following advantages of integration were discussed by Mr. Myers:

1. Larger annuities would be received by most retired employees after they reach the age of 65. Before 65, for employees receiving \$5,000 or more, the benefits would be based as they now are on 1½ percent of the highest average annual basic salary for any consecutive five years, multiplied by the length of service. After 65, this would change to 1 percent of the first \$5,000 and 1½ percent of the additional average annual basic salary for the five-year period. OASI benefits would increase the annuity on the average by 8 percent for nonmarried persons and much more for married persons, because of the wife's benefits under OASI.

2. Very much better survivor protection would be provided, particularly for younger employees whose family obligations are heavy in proportion to their salaries, their length of service, and the savings or property they have accumulated.

3. Employees who work for the government less than five years would receive more equitable treatment. Under the present Civil Service Retirement System, they

(Continued on Page 4)

From the Field

Name Committee Take Notice

Dear Sirs:

It appears to me that the OPEDA should consider consolidating with employee organizations of similar composition in the other Executive Departments, if any such exist. In the absence of such organizations, the professional employees of those Departments might be, and indeed should be, invited to affiliate with OPEDA, perhaps with a broadened name to indicate the change in scope.

Very sincerely yours,
GLEN F. BAILEY.

2430 Greenwood Drive
San Pablo 10, Calif.

Editor's Note: In answering Mr. Bailey's letter, Mrs. Meyers of the OPEDA staff office wrote "... From time to time in the past, efforts have been made to interest other Departments in having their professional employees organize groups such as ours. On the whole, great interest was expressed, but to our knowledge no other such group is in existence. I shall be happy to pass your suggestion along to our Council . . ."

Florida Member Recruits Five

C. B. Blickensderfer of Brooksville, Fla., sent in the names of five new recruits along with a payment of \$10. The names and address show he didn't confine himself to one town or even one county, though he did stay with SCS personnel. Their names and addresses are: E. M. Creel, Brooksville; P. S. Feagle, Dade City; Horace S. Hull, Ocala; E. Loy Strickland, Bushnell; and H. J. Haysworth, Trenton.

Mr. Blickensderfer asked for more enrollment blanks. Maybe more OPEDA members like Mr. Blickensderfer is the answer to the Council's problem of a larger membership.

We would like to hear from more field members—your accomplishments, your problems, and your opinions on questions plaguing the Council.

OMISSION

B. Ralph Stauber, AMS, was omitted from the Executive Committee listing in the June issue of the NEWSLETTER. Our apologies.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMITTEE

With the life insurance legislation out of the way, the committee is now devoting time to:

Health Insurance

The proposed legislation on health insurance is known as Senate Bill 3114 and H.R. 8356. Chairman of the sub-committee to study this proposed legislation is Albert M. Limburg, SCS, with Robert Hill, Personnel, assisting. The bill will establish for Federal civilian employees and employees of the District of Columbia and their dependents, on a voluntary basis, a program of contributory hospitalization, medical care and other personal health service benefits. These would be provided through the prepayment method from private sources, with government contributions to the cost of such benefits and pay deductions for the share of such costs borne by the employee.

In-Service Training

There is legislation to provide in-service training to Federal employees, who, because of the nature of their work, would take this training at commercial laboratories, universities and other places when essential to the work of the government. The Department has already supplied a preliminary report to Congress indicating the needs for this kind of legislation. William Pate, ARS, is acting as chairman of the subcommittee on this subject, and E. R. Draheim, Personnel, is assisting.

A subcommittee is also studying tests and other methods of selecting supervisory employees. Earl Love ridge, FS, is chairman, assisted by John Wells, B&F, and Richard Schmitt, REA. This study springs from the need for the highest quality of persons in places of administration and supervision in the government. A preliminary report which was prepared is being studied. It will serve as a guide for further study and recommendations.—L. K. Wright, AMS, Chairman.

PROFESSIONAL COMMITTEE

A subcommittee headed by Mr. Emory D. Burgess reviewed the new appointment system tentatively approved by the Civil Service Commission to go into effect if the Whitten Amendment were repealed, and found itself in substantial agreement with it.

At the July 27, 1954, luncheon meeting the Council approved the CSC plan for "career-conditional" appointments. This new type of competitive appointment would be given persons hired through open competitive Civil Service examinations. These appointments would have the following major characteristics:

- a. Career-conditional employees would have competitive Civil Service status—that is, they may be promoted, reassigned, transferred or reappointed after breaks in service.

(Continued on Page 4)

ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

Substantial benefits for OPEDA members were enacted by the 83d Congress. Among them were:

Fringe Benefits:

Whitten Rider so modified as to revoke most features objectionable to career employees. Promotions and reinstatements of career employees will be made permanent. Many thousands of present indefinite employees can achieve permanent career status. Statutory on permanent employees in executive branch raised 10 percent, opening 358,000 permanent jobs. This revision is regarded as a Congressional directive to the executive department to begin making permanent appointments, and the Civil Service Commission's conversion program has been widely publicized.

Leave. Arbitrary restrictions on the accumulation and use of annual leave repealed. Restored previous privileges of carrying over accumulations of up to 60 or 90 days.

Longevity pay increases. Authorized for all except those above GS-15.

Overtime. More equitable overtime pay.

CPC from Classification Act to Wage Boards. Will peg wages at level of prevailing wage rates in area of employment.

Entrance salaries. Entrance rates above the minimum rates of the grade to recruit scarce skills.

Annuity increases. Temporary increases in annuities of retired workers voted several years ago made permanent. Also the first \$1,200 of civil service annuities were exempted from income taxes.

Excused absences. Per diem employees granted benefit of excused absence with pay on same basis as annually paid employees.

Uniform allowance. A uniform allowance up to \$100 a year was granted to general schedule employees required to wear uniforms.

Incentive awards. Incentive award program expanded and made applicable to all employees.

Reduced taxes.

10 percent reduction in income tax.

Unemployment Insurance.

Unemployment benefits have been provided for Federal employees for the first time. Benefits determined under unemployment compensation law of State in which employed. D. C. benefits increased.

Pay bills.

OPEDA has consistently supported the original Administration-backed proportional pay increase that would correct existing inequities in Federal pay scales. This would have improved the relative pay of career employees in our brackets, GS-5 and up. As you know, during the closing days of the 83d Congress, both houses passed a 5 percent general pay increase, with a maximum of \$440. This would have added to the existing inequities.

The President pocket-vetoed the measure. He said that the measure was inadequate to meet the vital and urgent need of legislation for pay increases and classification adjustments. He stated his intention to pursue this objective next January when the 84th Congress convenes.

It is reported that most of the leading members of the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee have agreed to reintroduce the Federal Pay Bill (without being too definite as to what pay bill they mean) and push it through Congress early enough to override a Presidential veto. If Congress will introduce and pass the Administration-backed bill that OPEDA has been consistently plugging for, there will be no veto.

When Congress convenes next January, OPEDA's major projects will involve support of a satisfactory pay bill, and decision on the action to be taken on the Kaplan report to coordinate Civil Service retirement benefits with Social Security.—RALPH W. SHERMAN, ARS, Chairman, Economic Committee.

OPEDA

Issued at Washington, D. C., Each Quarter of Calendar Year.

(Not printed at Government expense)

Purpose of publication: Dissemination of information pertaining to the welfare of professional employees of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The Code of Ethics of OPEDA

BASIC OBLIGATIONS

TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:

Courteous, efficient, and impartial service.

TO OUR GOVERNMENT:

Loyalty, faith, and full measure of devoted service.

TO OUR ASSOCIATES:

Courtesy, fairness, freedom of expression, moral support, opportunity, and recognition.

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Professional Committee

(Continued From Page 3)

- b. They would have indefinite tenure—that is, they would fall in RIF Group II.
- c. Their first year of service will be a probationary period. After successful completion of probation, career-conditional employees will have protection of Section 14 of the Veterans Preference Act or the Lloyd-LaFollette Act.
- d. Career-conditional employees will have statutory restoration rights if called to military service. Such rights would not entitle them to bump regular career employees.
- e. Upon completing three years of service, career-conditional employees would automatically become permanent career employees and would move to Group I for RIF purposes.

The only other matter before this committee is the matter of assistance OPEDA might give the USDA Graduate School. Your chairman has had one conference with T. Roy Reid on the matter.—*Meredith C. Wilson, FES, Chairman.*

Kaplan Report

(Continued From Page 2)

are only entitled to return of their money. Under the Kaplan proposal, they would have potential pension rights and wage credits under OASI.

4. The initial cost on the first \$4,200 of salary would be less. It

would be 5½ percent (3½ percent to Civil Service Retirement and 2 percent to OASI) as compared with the present 6 percent (which would continue to be applicable above \$4,200).

Disadvantages

Disadvantages would occur for some people with the integration of the two systems.

1. Benefits now obtainable from overlapping would be eliminated. Mr. Myers gave as an example a wife who works for the government with a husband who works for private industry. Under present law, the wife gets both the Civil Service Retirement benefit and the OASI wife's benefit. Under the proposal she would receive the reduced Civil Service Retirement supplementary annuity, and the larger of her own OASI benefit or the OASI wife's benefit.

2. Government professional employees who work part time outside of government and are thus entitled to an OASI benefit in addition to their Civil Service pension would receive lower total annuities.

3. Government employees who retire and who take a new job would receive lower income after 65 than at present because the OASI portion of the combined benefit would not be payable. Also they would receive lower retirement benefits upon actual complete retirement after the age of 65 than under the present double payment basis.

4. Children's survivor benefits would not continue beyond the age of 18 in cases of disability as they

do under the present Civil Service System.

In addition to these disadvantages for special cases, a somewhat higher combined contribution rate would eventually be required from all employees (6 percent in 1960 and more than that after 1965) if the OASI rate continues to increase in accordance with the schedule in the law. Mr. Myers believes the higher rate would be offset by more adequate protection and benefits offered by the integrated systems.

Cost of Running OPEDA

(Continued From Page 1)

that persons in each of the larger centers be appointed to look after membership promotion for the Council and that OPEDA offer field memberships at a dollar. Mr. Henderson urged careful consideration of the suggestions.

Glenn Rule, SCS, reported for Charles Logan, ARS, chairman of the committee to consider changing the name of OPEDA. The Council discussed two questions: Whether the organization is to remain in Agriculture alone or become government wide; and whether or not we wish to retain the professional aspect, and keep it in the name of the organization. The consensus: to restrict the organization to USDA and to continue use of the word professional, with an effort to liberalize its interpretation. More up-to-date developments in this committee are found on page one.

The other committee reports read at this Council meeting have been included in reports found on pages two and three.

OPEDA Needs More Members to Give Added Prestige to Those Who Speak for Us.

CUT ON THIS LINE AND MAIL

Organization of Professional Employees
of the U. S. Department of Agriculture
P. O. Box 381 — Washington 4, D. C.

Date _____, 195____

Application hereby is made for membership in the Organization of Professional Employees of the United States Department of Agriculture, the annual dues of which are \$2.00 per year and for which there is no initiation or membership fee.

Name (First name in full: Mr., Mrs., Miss, Dr.)

Address _____

Bureau _____ Div. or Branch _____

Title _____ Classification: GS-_____

Enclosed is check (), currency (), money order () for \$2.00 for 195____ dues. (Checks or money orders may be made payable to Org. Prof. Employees USDA, or simply to O.P.E.D.A.)

(Signature of Applicant)

OPEDA
P. O. Box 381
Washington 4, D. C.

Sec. 34.65(e), P.L.&R.